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ABSTRACT

This document presents a report from an advisory council set up by the New Jersey State Department of Education to list and define a common core of values deemed essential to society and acceptable to the majority of New Jersey citizens and to recommend goals and objectives for character education. It briefly outlines the process the council followed in studying character- and values-related materials and in conducting public hearings on values education throughout the state of New Jersey. A set of six premises that underlie the conclusions of the council are listed and discussed. The next section lists, in alphabetical order, the four core values the council decided upon as the core of the state's character and values education program. Each value is subdivided into traits upon which the core value is based. The four core values identified by the council are: (1) civic responsibility; (2) respect for the natural environment; (3) respect for others; and (4) respect for self. The document concludes with suggestions from the council for implementation of a character and values education program.

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REPORT
OF THE
ADVISORY COUNCIL
ON
DEVELOPING CHARACTER AND VALUES
IN
NEW JERSEY STUDENTS

March, 1989

PTM 900.22

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February 13, 1989

The Honorable Saul Cooperman
Commissioner of Education
State Department of Education
225 West State Street, CN 500
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0500

Dear Commissioner Cooperman:

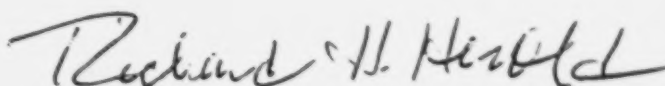
I am pleased to transmit to you the report of the Advisory Council on Developing Character and Values in New Jersey Students. The Council was established in October, 1988, and was requested by Governor Kean to present its report by March, 1989.

The twenty-one members of the Council have been diligent in seeking to carry out their responsibilities. In addition to the specific tasks necessitated by our charge, the full membership has met on numerous occasions in Trenton and elsewhere for investigative and deliberative sessions. We hope our report will be helpful.

Throughout the period of its endeavors, the Council has been effectively and courteously assisted by members of your staff, especially Dr. Joel Bloom, Assistant Commissioner, and Dr. Jacqueline Cusack, Director of the Bureau of Policy, Program Implementation and Evaluation.

The members of our group join me in expressing appreciation for this opportunity to have been of service.

Sincerely yours,



RHH:bas
Enclosure

**ADVISORY COUNCIL ON DEVELOPING CHARACTER AND VALUES
IN NEW JERSEY STUDENTS**

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The Reverend Caleb Oates, President
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The Honorable Paulette Sapp-Peterson
Judge, Trenton Municipal Court
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The Reverend Stanley Vander Klay
Northside Community Chapel
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Paterson, New Jersey

Dr. Donald D. Warner
Superintendent of Schools
Red Bank Regional High School District
Little Silver, New Jersey

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The task of the...educator is not to cut down jungles but to irrigate deserts. The right defense against false sentiments is to [teach] just sentiments.

- C. S. Lewis.

The Charge to the Panel

Governor Thomas H. Kean, in his 1988 State of the State address, identified character development within schools as a priority and charged the Commissioner of Education with initiating a program to address this need. The Governor asserted his belief that the people of this state and nation have a common body of values, saying, "The thing that holds us together, that keeps society from flying centripetally apart, is the moral code we live by."

In response to the Governor's mandate, in September, 1988, the New Jersey State Department of Education, under the leadership of Saul Cooperman, Commissioner, promulgated a monograph entitled Developing Character and Values in New Jersey Students. That document provided for the establishment of an advisory council to accomplish the following:

1. To list and define a common core of values deemed essential to our society and acceptable to the great majority of New Jersey citizens.
2. To recommend goals and objectives for character education.

Process

The council has received and studied extensive character- and values-related materials and professional literature. Included were the excellent 1984 report of the Task Force on Values Education and Ethical Behavior for Baltimore County, Maryland, as well as published articles and proposals from federal, state, and private organizations concerned with values education. We also reviewed our charge in light of the existing New Jersey Family Life Curriculum and examined the findings and conclusions set forth within that curriculum.

The Council conducted five public hearings in Edison, Montclair, Morristown, Sewell, and Trenton, New Jersey, at which interested citizens were invited to offer their views. We learned at those hearings (and elsewhere) that the citizens of New Jersey are enormously interested in and supportive of values education. The opinions of our fellow citizens as expressed in their statements and suggestions have strongly influenced the content of this report. Transcripts of the hearings have been prepared and filed with the State Department of Education.

We were addressed most informatively by Dr. Mary Ellen Saterlie, Associate Superintendent of the Baltimore County Schools and Chairperson of the Task Force mentioned above. Council members questioned Dr. Saterlie at some length about her Task Force's procedures and subsequent outcomes.

We have received written communications from citizens throughout the state giving their views on values education, as well as their opinions of societal failures related to a presently perceived distortion of values.

Importantly, we benefitted from a continuing exchange of opinion and ideas within the Council. Our membership was broadly based, including educators, clergy, other professional, community and business persons, and students. Our discussions were open and helpful to us.

Premises

The following concepts underlie our conclusions:

1. Values may be defined as essential principles or standards which guide behavior and are unifying to the members of our democratic community, a community which depends for its existence upon the informed consent of the governed.
2. Values should first be taught within the family structure. Whether or not that occurs, and sometimes it does not, it is a proper and historically supported function of teachers to reinforce or initiate such education in values as a part of the larger school curriculum. Character and values education is currently mandated in our public schools pursuant to existing requirements of the State Administrative Code. Many New Jersey public school systems are actively engaged in values instruction.
3. This nation includes numerous distinct ethnic, religious, and cultural groups who have a socially recognized and legally protected right to coexist as equals. Nevertheless, in the interest of the common good, our free pluralistic society requires an understanding of, and conduct based upon, generally accepted moral and ethical values. If those fundamentals do not exist, the self-involved alternative will deprive us of our democratic foundations.
4. The apparent fact that values can and do conflict with each other from time to time does not imply that such values are relative, or insecurely based. It rather signifies that the application of specific values in complex human situations is in no way analogous to the memorization of state capitals or mathematical formulae. Values are learned through a process of critical inquiry and a weighing of circumstances. Thus, for example, if absolute loyalty and absolute honesty should come into conflict, an analysis of the surrounding facts and circumstances will be necessary in order to form a proper judgment as to which value will "prevail". Reasoned analytical judgments are made in all aspects of a thoughtful life and need to be made in values education.
5. Value-infused conduct centering upon selflessness must be demonstrated by all of us. No one can be exempted from living a value-based life, and no conditions can be said to create a bar to such a life. It is obvious, however, that the growth of positive standards is only well-facilitated where the environment is free from oppression and hunger, where hope may arise. The presence of hope in each of us is a basis for our impulse to act with respect towards ourselves and others.
6. Many lists of values have been compiled by independent groups in various states and by professional organizations. In no list known to this Council has "love" appeared as a value. Yet we conclude that love suffuses all other values and, along with hope, underlies altruistic conduct. The word "love" is often trivialized and degraded by misemphasis. In its deeper meanings, however, love supports all of humankind's best efforts.

Core Values

The following, in alphabetical order, are values this Council concludes may be used as the core of our character and values education program. Through our discussions and study of various proposals, we became increasingly aware of how our values overlap and interplay. It is possible to establish a very long list if every nuance is to be given a separate heading. We have elected to list relatively few core values, but have included those essential attributes which together form the overriding value. Brief definitions and comments are also set forth.

1. CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY.

Based upon:

- a. Acknowledgment of Authority. Acceptance of the need for and primacy of authority in given circumstances. An acknowledgment that privileges and rights in a democracy should be balanced by a sense of obligation to others. Socially conscious conduct, though neither passive nor obsequious.
- b. Global Awareness. Consciousness of the interdependence of all peoples, social systems, and natural systems which necessitates cooperation among all nations.
- c. Justice. Fairness. The entitlement of every person to that treatment which is his or her impartial and unprejudiced due.
- d. Patriotism. The support of or love of one's country, especially through an understanding of its advantages; not inconsistent with vigorous opposition to specific governmental policies or actions. Implies respect for and adherence to democracy, equality, equal opportunity for all.
- e. Property Rights. Acknowledgment of the right of others to possession of their property without interference.

2. RESPECT FOR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT.

Based upon:

- a. Care for and conservation of all the other living inhabitants of the earth.
- b. Care for and conservation of those prerequisites to life which were given to us in fertile, treed, and flowering land; clear air; and pure water.

- c. Conduct based upon knowledge that the natural environment is not locally or nationally severable, but is everywhere a part of a larger and interdependent whole.

3. RESPECT FOR OTHERS.

Based upon:

- a. Compassion. Service to Others. That characteristic of meaningfully sharing and responding to the feelings and needs of others which leads to providing personal assistance and comfort to them.
- b. Courtesy. Cooperativeness. The recognition of our mutual interdependence upon our fellow human beings which causes us to treat them politely, to respect their utterances and wishes, and to work jointly with them for our common good. Innovation, spontaneous creativity, critical judgment, and dissent are all complementary and essential outgrowths of this attribute.
- c. Honesty. Trustworthiness and fairness in speaking and acting. The absence of fraud, deceit, and lying.
- d. Loyalty. Steadfastness or faithfulness to a person, custom, or idea.
- e. Moderation. Conduct which is maintained within reasonable limits so as to avoid excessive or violent extremes.
- f. Recognition and understanding of various religious traditions. A social and historical perspective based upon an appreciation of the contributions of various religious traditions.
- g. Regard for Human Life. Acknowledgment of the overriding importance of human life and the right of every human to the peaceful continuation of life. Includes understanding and practicing responsible sexual behavior. Also includes rejection of whatever endangers or diminishes the value of human life--such as violence, drug and alcohol abuse.
- h. Tolerance. The capacity for and the practice of allowing and respecting the differing natures, beliefs, and standards of others. The avoidance of racial, religious, or gender arrogance or animosity. The ability to permit dissenting beliefs, customs, or standards.

4. RESPECT FOR SELF.

Based upon:

- a. Accountability. The obligation each of us carries to explain, to justify our conduct. The resultant circumstance of being answerable for our actions.
- b. Courage. The willingness to face obstacles, including danger, with determination.
- c. Diligence. Commitment. Reliability. The persistent desire and ability to apply oneself with care and effort to occupations and relationships.
- d. Frugality. Thrift. Wise economy in the management of assets, including natural resources. The avoidance of unnecessary expenditures.
- e. Knowledge and Learning. A desire for learning informed by a commitment to rational inquiry. The devotion to development of the mind. Value-based education rightly assumes that learning will be transformed into positive character and behavior patterns.
- f. Moral Courage. Firm adherence to morally based actions without regard to whether the consequences will be personally advantageous or disadvantageous. Includes integrity and self-honesty. Together, these are prerequisites to principled conduct.
- g. Self-Esteem. Pride. Belief in oneself and one's own potential for successful participation in our society. Must be moderated with tolerance for others.

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF VALUES

1. CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY

Based upon:

- a. Acknowledgment of Authority.
- b. Global Awareness.
- c. Justice, Fairness.
- d. Patriotism.
- e. Property Rights.

2. RESPECT FOR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Based upon:

- a. Care for and conservation of all living beings.
- b. Care for and conservation of land, air, and water.
- c. Conduct recognizing environmental interdependence.

3. RESPECT FOR OTHERS

Based upon:

- a. Compassion. Service to Others.
- b. Courtesy, Cooperativeness.
- c. Honesty.
- d. Loyalty.
- e. Moderation.
- f. Understanding of various religious traditions.
- g. Regard for human life.
- h. Tolerance.

4. RESPECT FOR SELF

Based upon:

- a. Accountability.
- b. Courage.
- c. Diligence. Commitment. Reliability.
- d. Frugality. Thrift.
- e. Knowledge and Learning.
- f. Moral Courage.
- g. Self-esteem. Pride.

Implementation

The Council, with a mandate to submit its recommendations promptly, did not deem it appropriate to launch a detailed inquiry into how best and most effectively character and values should be taught in our public schools. We are aware, however, that many educators and lay persons share a deep concern that values not be inculcated by rote or doctrinal insistence. We share that concern. We believe that such a mechanical approach will not produce meaningful results and, equally negative, will not receive the support of local educational and parent communities.

We are also aware that many educators and lay persons share a deep concern that values not simply be spread before our students for independent choice or rejection at their pleasure. We share that concern. We believe that complex and beneficial values are not simply chosen, but must be taught in an evaluative process.

We also recommend that, in each school, the moral component of actions be consciously noted as a backdrop to every learning experience. We conceive that a values-based education will teach those values as a part of every academic course, as a part of athletic endeavors, and in all student relationships. As previously noted, character education is now a stated part of the public school curriculum in New Jersey pursuant to the Administrative Code and is in process in many schools.

Of primary importance is our view that character and values education cannot simply be imposed by any one group upon another. Emphasis may vary significantly from place to place, from environment to environment. Nor should values education simply be handed to our schools and teachers as one more major responsibility. We suggest, rather, that this Council's recommendations should be only a starting point for a continued general effort throughout every school district in this state. We recommend the appointment of citizen groups for every public school system in New Jersey, charged with the task of developing a program for local implementation of the guidelines we have set forth. Only if this report is locally supported on a continuing and enthusiastic basis by parents, teachers, students, and others, will its conclusions stand any prospect of becoming generally accepted and acted upon standards. If the constituent elements of our society believe in the importance of the values set forth in this report, they must be seen and heard to act upon that belief.

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